

Filipino paramedic dies of MERS in UAE

11 April 2014

The United Arab Emirates announced Friday that one of six Filipino paramedics in the UAE who have been infected by the MERS coronavirus has died from the respiratory disease.

The announcement comes just days after a 24-hour shutdown of the [emergency department](#) at a major hospital in Saudi Arabia, where most cases have been reported, amid fears of a spread of the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome among medical staff.

The UAE interior ministry said the six staff members worked at the Al-Ain Rescue and Ambulance Section in Abu Dhabi.

The ministry "has taken all necessary preventive health measures by placing the patients under quarantine," it said in a statement without specifying when the paramedic died.

It also urged people who have been transferred lately to hospitals to check on their condition, as a precautionary move.

Health authorities in Saudi Arabia had said that three MERS patients in Jeddah were health workers, including one of two who died in the western city in recent weeks, prompting authorities to close the emergency department at the city's King Fahd Hospital for 24 hours late on Monday.

Saudi Arabia has recorded 182 MERS infections, of whom 67 have died since the [virus](#) first appeared in the kingdom in September 2012.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) said on Friday that it had been told of 212 laboratory-confirmed cases of MERS infection worldwide, of which 88 have proved fatal.

The first MERS infection in the UAE was announced in July last year, while its first death from the SARS-like virus was announced in December.

Friday's statement did not provide figures on the total number of MERS deaths or infections in the UAE.

But the WHO this month said it was notified of the March 30 death of an 64-year-old Emirati man with underlying medical conditions.

The man "did not have contact with a previously laboratory-confirmed case, but has had exposure to animals" and had visited a camel farm in Saudi Arabia on March 10.

The MERS virus is considered a deadlier but less-transmissible cousin of the SARS virus that erupted in Asia in 2003 and infected 8,273 people, nine percent of whom died.

Experts are still struggling to understand MERS, for which there is no known vaccine.

A study has said the virus has been "extraordinarily common" in camels for at least 20 years, and may have been passed directly from the animals to humans.

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